



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
June 22, 2006

For More Information, Contact:
Tracy Miller, M.P.H.
Michelle Feist
West Nile Virus Surveillance Program
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: tkmiller@nd.gov
mafeist@nd.gov

Several Birds and One Horse Test Positive for West Nile Virus in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health reported today that several birds and a horse have tested positive for West Nile virus in the state.

Three sentinel chickens tested positive for West Nile virus – one in Ramsey County and two in Grand Forks County. In addition, one dead bird tested positive in Cass County, as did one horse in Burleigh County.

Eight sentinel chicken flocks have been established in areas around the state. A surveillance tool for early identification of West Nile virus, the sentinel chicken flocks are tested once a week to determine if they were exposed to West Nile virus.

As of June 16, 2006, 13 humans had been tested for West Nile virus at the North Dakota Public Health Laboratory. Thus far, no human West Nile virus cases have been identified.

“The identification of the West Nile virus-positive birds and horse indicates there is West Nile virus activity in North Dakota again this year,” said Tracy Miller, M.P.H., West Nile Virus Surveillance Program manager for the Department of Health. “With big outdoor events approaching, such as softball tournaments and Fourth of July celebrations, this finding is a reminder that everyone across the state should protect themselves from mosquito bites.”

In 2005, 86 human cases of West Nile virus were reported to the Department of Health. In addition, West Nile infection was identified in four horses, 17 dead birds, 27 sentinel chickens and four mosquito pools.

-- more --

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@state.nd.us

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

“Everyone is at risk of developing West Nile virus infection after being bitten by an infected mosquito,” Miller said. “However, people older than 50 are at the greatest risk of developing serious complications from the disease.”

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes, the state health department recommends the following protective measures:

- Use insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or permethrin when outdoors. Always follow the directions on the manufacturer’s label.
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite.
- When possible, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts while outside.
- Eliminate stagnant water and leaf debris in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (e.g., buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).
- Keep mosquitoes from entering your home by repairing screens in windows and doors.
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed.

This year, surveillance for West Nile virus-infected birds in North Dakota began June 1, 2006, and is coordinated by the Department of Health’s Division of Disease Control in conjunction with a variety of agencies, including local public health units, local veterinarians, extension agents, North Dakota zoos, state and federal parks, bird watching clubs, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the USDA Wildlife Services. The public is encouraged to report sightings of dead birds to one of these agencies or via the online dead bird report form at www.ndwnv.com.

A person cannot catch the virus by touching a dead bird; however, it is always good practice for anyone handling dead wildlife to take precautions such as wearing protective gloves.

West Nile virus information, including numbers of cases in animals and humans, is updated on the Department of Health website (www.ndwnv.com) by 8 a.m. every Wednesday. For more information, contact Tracy Miller or Michelle Feist, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378.

-- 30 --

To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.